

Spinfont bends type to many shapes

If printing slanted, rotated, curved or circular text on a laser printer excites you, look into a new font printing program called Spinfont.

From SoftCraft Inc. for \$95, Spinfont works directly with a set of typeface outlines called Bitstream Fontware, which is also available from the same company or other vendors for \$95.

If you have a compatible laser printer, here are some of the type design tricks you can create with Spinfont and Bitstream Fontware:

■ **Slanted text.** Text can be rotated at any angle. Phrases at an angle, sometimes called "snipes," are effective attention-getters in an advertisement or flyer copy.

■ **Spokes of rotated text.** This uncommon design repeats slanted text around a hub to produce spokes of text in a circle. It can create a distinctive logo.

■ **Curved text.** Text can be curved gently or in roller coaster fashion. Spinfont offers complete control over the degree of curva-

ture, size and style of type.

■ **Ringed text.** This format bends text into a circle. Typically the text is set in concentric lines and against a reverse, white-on-black, background. The ef-



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fect is a crisp, stamp-like logo.

The system is slow, but it works. Depending on the general speed of your computer and the amount of memory available, it can take from 15 minutes to more than a half hour for the program to do all its fancy calculating.

I got impatient, but found the waiting was a good time to study the manual. Spinfont is a menu-driven program, but has only barebones on-screen help. You need to delve into the manual or work on the tutorial before you can effec-

tively use all of Spinfont's features.

The real artistry of using Spinfont comes from combining a variety of its elements. A given design might merge circular and rotated-text, geometric line figures, and assorted shadings. If your computer display is graphics equipped, you'll want to make use of Spinfont's on-screen preview for fine-tuning a design.

The tradeoff on using Spinfont is the time and energy of learning to manipulate the program effectively. In addition, the long processing time for each design becomes significant, especially for an inexperienced operator.

You can save money, however, if you already own a current version of WordPerfect, Word, PageMaker and Ventura. Bitstream offers several free fonts for use with Spinfont.

Also available, is a more advanced program from SoftCraft called the Font Solution Pack at \$595. With this tool you can edit

existing characters or create new ones, add a variety of dazzling special effects, and even create companion fonts for color separations with desktop publishing programs.

■ **The bottom line:** Spinfont is a great program for a computerized graphic arts department. An artist who is able to combine familiarity with the software with good design sense could produce smashing results.

For the casual user, however, who has to acquire font libraries and possibly upgrade equipment before getting started — not to mention, the time and effort to become proficient using the program — it's probably overkill for the few times a year the program might be used. To contact SoftCraft Inc., write 16 N. Carroll St., Suite 500, Madison, Wis. 53703.

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